European journal of American studies
Reviews 2014-2

# Ada Savin, ed. Migration and Exile: Charting New Literary and Artistic Territories.

Anna Diamantoulis

**Electronic version**
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/10309
ISSN: 1991-9336

**Publisher**
European Association for American Studies

**Electronic reference**
Anna Diamantoulis, « Ada Savin, ed. Migration and Exile: Charting New Literary and Artistic Territories. », *European journal of American studies* [Online], Reviews 2014-2, document 1, Online since 20 June 2014, connection on 05 May 2019. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/10309

# Ada Savin, ed. Migration and Exile: Charting New Literary and Artistic Territories.

Anna Diamantoulis

1 This collection of essays entitled *Migration and Exile: Charting New Literary and Artistic Territories* and edited by Ada Savin aims to bring together essays whose central concerns, as indeed the title suggests, are migration and exile and whose engagement with these concerns raises questions regarding nation, memory, space and language, all of which are categorised as “the central components of the exiled writers’ and artists’ existence and creation” (2). This collection also prides itself in bringing together contributions on this field of study from both Anglophone and Hispanic-American studies, two research areas which Savin admittedly states have “traditionally been kept apart, at least within the French academic world” (1). It is indeed the case that both of these aims are accomplished. The first is clearly signalled in the division of the essays into various sub-categories and is furthered and more specifically evident in the critical concerns of the individual articles that have been selected. The latter aim and its accomplishment is evident not only in the academic and cultural backgrounds of the contributing writers, but also in the publication choice of having the essays published in the original languages in which they were written, those being English, French and Spanish. One drawback of such a publication choice for many readers, including myself, is

that many of the articles that constitute part of this collection were not accessible. As a result of this inaccessibility, my review will only explore the articles which were published in English.

2 The articles that form part of this collection are divided into subcategories. Part I is entitled ‘Roots and Routes’ and the five articles that fall under this category explore both the spaces that individuals occupy and the movement to and from such spaces, whether through migration or exile, and how this movement constitutes part of the development of identity. Monica Manolescu’s article engages with Joseph Brodsky’s “Watermark,” an essay concerning Venice. In her engagement with this essay, Manolescu posits that beyond the dualistic, familiar approach to exile, whereby the exile is situated between two cultures and languages, a new ‘third space of migration’ should be engaged with;’ a space that lies “between them, neither the origin nor the end” (14). For Manolescu this third space of migration in “Watermark” is represented in the city of Venice, not only because it represents a midway station in the author’s personal life (between his home country of Russia and the United States where he was expelled to), but also because the fluidity of the city triggers one to think about “history and the crossing of borders, both physical and linguistic” (14). For Manolescu, the space of Venice, lying as it does between Russia and America, “echoes them both” and thus “deepen[s] the migrant’s understanding of his own restlessness” (26)

3 “Life on the Seesaw: Displacement, Homes and Identities in M.E. Ravage’s *An American in the Making*” written by Alina Sufaru furthers this engagement with movement between spaces. Sufaru, engaging with M. E. Ravage’s understudied autobiography, explores how movement, the passage from Romania to America, from America to Paris, the passage back to America, and then to Paris again, signalled the author’s straddling of a seesaw, or indeed the movement between various spaces that separated his various identities. Such a process is seen as positive for the author as it provided “him with the means to embrace his conflicting, chameleon-like identity/ies” (36). Here, home lies “outside space and time” (36), but rather with each new home, with each movement to a new space, the creation of a new self takes place, one that “can walk alongside the past selves- acknowledging them, [and] accepting them” (36).

4 Theodora Patrona's article: "Migration, Space and Ethnic Female Subjectivities: Pantelis Voulgaris' *Brides*" signals a departure from the other articles that form Part I of this collection. While also engaging with space, and more specifically with space and the ethnic female subject, this article explores a visual primary source. Patrona critically engages with the film *Brides* (2004), directed by Pantelis Voulgaris, and focuses on the female protagonist's progression through three spatial settings: the homeland, on board the ship and in America. The shift between these three spatial settings is shown to both enable and signal the development of the protagonist's identity. In engaging with a voyage on board a ship this article also highlights one of the "crucial topos of 20th century migration literature and film" (5). Patrona sees this process that is evident in *Brides* representing the increased contemporary interest in space and identity and quotes Susan Stanford Friedman in stating that such journeys are utilised to stress "not the ordered movement of linear growth but the lack of solid ground, the ceaseless change of fluidity" (67), linking back to Manolescu's engagement with Venice and neatly concluding Part I. It is in such a way that all three articles that form Part I of this collection (and which are published in English) through their preoccupation with space and the movement between spaces, engage with 'roots and routes.' The sub-categories or indeed parts in which this collection is divided clearly signal the common threads that run through the various critical essays gathered and allow the reader to come to terms with some of the central concerns surrounding migration and exile in a straightforward manner.

5 Part II of the collection, entitled 'Transcultural Fictions' furthers an engagement with these concerns, and more specifically with language and memory. The first article of this section is Ineke Bockting's "Aspects of Liminality in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*" which, unlike the other articles that make up this collection, engages with a well-explored literary work. In its engagement it focuses on Nabokov's expatriate condition and the manner in which this condition can be seen as being projected onto the narrator of Lolita. To begin with the narrator, like the author himself, he is shown to have traversed many different locations, stretching "across the Atlantic, between the Riviera" (74) and this is shown to have left him in a perpetual void. This void is filled by the narrator with language, in his creation

of Lolita. This creation is furthered by the fact that Humbert and Dolores remain constantly on the road, “in the liminal world of an endless exile” (77). It is indeed in such a way that the central concerns and themes of Lolita can be seen as reflecting the author’s condition, not only his expatriate condition but also the manner in which he can be seen as having depended “on a sense of exile for his writing” (73), signalling thus the relationship between exile and language. “Transnational Collisions and Collusions in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Gardens in the Dunes*” written by Sophie Croisy explores inter-American cultural contacts. Silko’s novel deals with the forced geographical, cultural and emotional displacement of a young Native-American girl, one of the last members of a desert tribe from Arizona who is sent to an Indian boarding school in California. The girl is depicted as being a stranger in her own land, an “internal exile.” It is only the space of the garden signified as it is by nature and historical artefacts that allows for trans-cultural connections to emerge, forming a “connecting thread between cultures” (5). Janna Odabas explores Vietnamese-American writer Le Thi Diem Thuy’s first novel which provides a portrait of a Vietnamese family who have escaped from the Vietnam War and have sought refuge in America. This article, entitled “Ghostly Presences: The Gangster We Are All Looking For” concerns itself with spectrality by engaging with the ghostly presence of the narrator’s brother’s ghost. For Odabas this ghost signals a haunting past, that “point[s] to repressed traumatic histories, to a lost homeland, to a potential new home, to aspects of (un)belonging, to questions of identity and cultural transmission” (103). It is the figure of the ghost that works in this story, according to Odabas, to connect past and present, by focusing on repressed memories that exist in the present, enabling the narrator to “create a cultural memory and identity” (112).

6 Part III, entitled ‘Post-National Horizons’ is made up of articles written in French and Spanish and were unfortunately inaccessible to me. In the articles I was able to access throughout the collection though, I was exposed to a thorough exploration of various elements surrounding migration and exile which include nation, memory, language and particularly space. My only regret is not being able to access the exploration on post-national horizons, as I feel that a discussion on this aspect of migration and exile is relevant to current studies and would (and indeed probably

does for French and Spanish speakers) form a neat conclusion to this well-thought out collection, albeit raising more questions and opening pathways for future studies and explorations.

---

## AUTHOR

ANNA DIAMANTOULIS

PhD Candidate, Institute of North American Studies at King's College, London